The Theosophical FORUM

JANUARY 1905

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THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM

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* * *

No one is in the least sense useless. Everything, from the speck of dust, to man, from man to God, has its own special, indisputable place in the vast scheme. If one single thing were utterly useless, it would be out of the scheme, separate from the One Life; which is unthinkable.

The human race consists of entities who are beginning to take conscious part in the project of nature, and, in a sense, may be said to be of more definite importance, for the time being, than the animal and lower kingdoms.

To condemn anyone as useless is to revile against God. Whatever our superior judgment may lay down, there are no drones. If our associates are apparently idle,—perhaps they need rest. In all cases peace and rest are reactions from strife and labour.

Everything, everyone, has a work to perform: to garner experience for the Great Brahm.

SIMPLICITY.

It has long been a hobby of mine that spiritual truths were so simple, so trite and obvious, that that was the very reason we overlooked them. We hear many expressions of exalted facts in big words of three or four syllables. They sound fine and we puzzle our brains to extract the meaning and often, I hope, do intellectually grasp the author's idea. But too often the spiritual essence of the truth is missed because it required brain effort to understand it. A learned man tells us that the two greatest weapons nature has with which to fight the neophyte are sexual instinct and the idea of separateness. That sounds very grand and we begin to wonder what it really means. First of all we are offended at the idea that nature should be opposed to the neophyte at all. We thought that spiritual evolution was in accord with nature. Then we remember having read somewhere that nature does oppose the efforts of anyone to master her secrets, and that it isn't until the mastery is accomplished that she turns round and is the willing and obedient slave of the aspirant. So we guess that nature must have been referred to in this sense, and then we go on with our analysis and speculate as to what is meant by the sexual instinct and the idea of separateness. Doubtless we would each come to a different conclusion. However, when we do reach a conclusion, and get an idea out of the sentence, the idea it conveys to us, we think how it applies to us, or how we should alter our conduct to accord with it. If very devoted we may register a resolve to henceforth begin a fight against the sexual instinct and the idea of separateness without really knowing what either of these two battles means. Perhaps before we fairly begin the battle we read something else that appeals to us just as much or more. We are told to cultivate the "higher carelessness," or that if we meditate on Atma or throw ourselves on the Higher Self that we can ignore all other rules, as they include everything else. We think to ourselves "That's just what I wanted. One solid rule that I can keep always before me and follow blindly and stop bothering about the plethora of confusing and conflicting advice that reaches me from all sides." And when we have this firmly settled in our minds, we find to our dismay that meditating on Atma and throwing ourselves on the Higher Self do not mean anything definite enough for a working hypothesis, and so we are at sea again.

I fancy that most of us have had such experiences, maybe are having them, and it is to these latter I especially address myself.

At the last analysis all spiritual rules, principles and precepts, are simple to the last degree. So simple that any child can understand them. The important ones have been phrased for us over and over again by the great spiritual teachers. Many of the most famous of these were described in a series of articles in this magazine, published about a year ago. It may be worth while to refer to them in this connection. It will be seen that just plain everyday "goodness", of the most commonplace sort, is what we, together with Christians, Buddhists and all other religious denominations, are striving for. Did you think Occultism or Theosophy meant something more than this? That we left these virtues behind and worked at higher and more recondite and more difficult tasks? If you did, you had better get the idea out of your head and begin all over again and try to be just plain "good." The very greatest need for most of us, our quickest and shortest route to Heaven or Nirvana or Reunion, or whatever word we use to express our goal, is to cultivate the homely virtues; the doing of our plain duty, patience, gentleness, unselfishness, the kind that gives his dinner to someone who needs it more than he does, not the kind who refuses Nirvana for the sake of Humanity. There will be lots of time to cultivate this latter kind after we have acquired a fair stock of its simpler prototype! Abstemiousness, control of all organs, faculties and senses, chastity, truthfulness, charity, mental, moral and physical tolerance. What we want to avoid is not the idea of separateness, or the becoming a *Prayeka Buddha,* but such simple things as selfishness, jealousy, backbiting, slander and evil speaking, gluttony, lust, lying, envy, malice and uncharitableness.

If we took the Sermon on the Mount or The Noble Eightfold Path as our only guide, and lived up to their simple teachings, and threw away all our occult books, I believe we would be better off at the end of our incarnation than if we continued to ignore and overlook simple things in a vain effort to live up to elaborate and mystically expressed occult standards of conduct, thought and life.

Now two words of warning.

First, I do not mean to detract in anyway from the devotional books we have in our Theosophical literature. I believe them to be the clearest and most elaborate expressions of spiritual truths the

world has ever received. They have been the chief comfort and solace of many minds and souls for years. But just because they are so mystical, so thorough and so elaborate, I find them not suited for all natures, and make this plea for simplicity.

Second, one must not gather from what I have said that I believe any religion teaching a simple system of ethics as good as Theosophy. I do not. I believe Theosophy has one supreme, paramount advantage over all other systems, and that is that it gives us a *basis* for ethics. It explains *why* we should be good. Not because God commands it, or because we will go to Hell if we don't or because a priest tells us to, but because to be good is a law of nature, which like all other natural laws punishes those who break it, and will keep on doing so forever if necessary until the lesson is learned and the disobedience ceases. Because sooner or later we must be good, and the sooner we are the better for us. This law, the Theosophic basis for ethics, can be phrased in countless different ways, each of which will appeal to certain understandings. Each of us can work out his own.

To sum up therefore, let us not forget the simple virtues, taught us as children, and really underlying all the mystical books and beautiful phrases we read so much. Let us turn occasionally from our contemplation of the Absolute, from our efforts towards union with the Supreme, and give a thought or two to whether or not we are cheerful at home, patient at the office, generous and truthful to our friends, indulgent and tolerant to the faults of others and ruthless when dealing with our own.

In other words let us be *good,* for we must be before we can be occultists.

THE UNFINISHED TALE.

At an oasis in the desert two caravans met. After the travellers had washed and refreshed themselves, they threw themselves down under the palms by the spring for repose and for thought, each according to his own nature and after the fashion of his kind. While the soldier planned further action, and the poet dreamed his song; while the sluggard dozed at intervals in his thoughts of luxurious repose and the lover thought of the world's desire mingled, with scorn for the man of affairs hard by who made calculations in a small worn pocket book amid the fumes of his pipe, there came to them a new voyager, an old man from the desert, accompanied only by a youth and these but craved water from the spring. But one of the attendants presently came forward and whispered his soldier master that the old man was an Arabian teacher whose fame was spread throughout the confines of Arabia, and that now he travelled to Mecca with one of his pupils.

Rousing himself the soldier approached this venerable man, and asked him to be seated amongst them, whereat the Arabian, assenting, asked if it would be agreeable for the company that his pupil should make music for them, which the youth presently did, most pleasantly, singing to a small instrument, not unlike a mandolin, which he carried.

After this, one of the company sang a ballad, and another told the unpublished facts of a famous episode, and, each contributing while the sluggard had their cups filled with a rare wine he carried with him, it befell at last that the venerable Arabian was the only member present who had contributed nothing to the cheer of the company.

Remarking this, and seeing also that because of his age they did not press him while their attitude showed respect towards him, the Arabian, turning to the soldier, who had, as it were, naturally, and by common consent taken control of the proceedings, proposed that he should in his turn tell a tale. At this, much satisfaction was evinced by all present, and even the attendants and camel drivers edged gradually near the group permitted at first, at last unnoticed, forgotten, as they themselves forgot all else in the absorbing interest of the tale. For in his own land the Arabian bore a name which

signified "Master-of-the-heart," as if the human heart were a lute on which he played at will, which was no less than the truth.

It was a simple tale, he told, the tale of a youth who longed to taste life to the full, to feel and see and know and love and hate and fail and conquer and—without more words—to touch, one by one, each note of life's octaves and to compel the music from them.

Whether the sound, were sad or sweet, he longed to produce it himself and to taste the power of the sound. So with a great effort this youth freed himself from confining circumstances and set forth upon the first stage of his journey. And as the Arabian told these things, the little breeze which heralds the dawn arose; the palms shivered; the low sigh of the desert awaking to life, the faint hum of insect life of the oasis and the grunt of the camels anticipating the start, mingled and deepened, attracting the attention of the Arabian, who with apologies for so long holding their attention, broke off his tale with these words.

"So now behold the youth, alert, vigilant, nerved to all endeavor and sure of himself, confronting his first great adventure. Will he conquer?—or will he fail?"

Reluctantly the travellers resumed their journey, and for a time their routes lay together. All day each hearer thought of the tale of the Arabian, imagining the state of the youth and the next chapter of his adventure, for the tale was one which knocked mightily at the heart of every man. But at nightfall, when a halt was called and all prepared eagerly to hear what next befell the youth in his great adventure, the Arabian was found to have disappeared from the company, not one of whom ever saw him again. And loud and prolonged was their regret. Far to the Southward rode he whom they missed, and when at nightfall his pupil begged of him that he might continue the tale, the teacher, indulgently smiling said:

"Nay; but thou shalt thyself live that tale. The years will tell it as I cannot."

On their separate paths through life went the hearers of the Arabian. But still the tale had its hold upon their minds and went with each on his way. Remembering its power and pathos, each told it, when the hour for tales came round, in his own fashion, and as the years passed, each half unconsciously added to the tale; each carried the fabled youth past the threshold of his first great adven-

ture. The soldier read into the story war, action and a soldier's trial; his temptations, his defeats—which were many—his triumph—final and complete. The man of affairs, the poet, the sluggard and every other invested it with a colour and a meaning typical of each. Even the poorest camel driver, much sought amongst his fellows in caravans because he knew the wonderful tale, wove into its final stages the possession of two camels, some date trees and a young beauty of an alien tribe won to wife. Each man had an audience of his own type, wherever he went, and as each (whether from truth, loyalty, or a shy shrinking from himself as mirrored in it) always attributed the tale to the Arabian, the fame of the story grew and his fame with it. At last, in the dull season, a daily journal published a version of it, calling it "An Arabian tale." Learned pundits disputed concerning its source. Literary students praised or dissected or copied it. Even the smart set yawned over it for an entire quarter of an hour and some went so far as to coin a new word from it, a word descriptive of the gait of the last Ascot winner. In one or another way, all these and every hearer felt the power of the humanity of the story and thus at last its fame reached back to the confines of the desert, and all Arabia knew at last that Master-of-the-heart was a supreme teller of tales, one known in all lands, even the land of the masterful Anglo-Saxon barbarian. Concealed but very great was then the pride of the Arabian.

One day the renown of the great tale came to the ears of that young singer, the pupil of the Arabian, now a man of middle age. Long had he pondered the wonderful tale, and now he thought once again, and then took his camel and travelled to the village where the master in his great age abode. Here, amid the restrained but deep joy of the master's household, the pupil told of the fame of the story and the maker, even showing it to them in the strange, uncouth lettering of the English barbarians' "day book," whose tales are known in Arabia to be lies of wonderous inventive ability but no basis of truth in them. Hence it was doubtless a day of much rejoicing in that far English land, when their day book printed a new and true tale.

When the household at length retired, and each lay dreaming of his share in the renown of the Master, that Master and his pupil looked one another in the eyes. The Master was first to speak, as is fitting.

"That which is to be read in the eyes of man, oh my pupil, is at times well confided to the hearts of the faithful."

"A truth told to the Wise is as a drop of pure water returned to the spring, oh Master! What thy pupil meditates upon is the real meaning of the wonderous tale."

"And what meaning givest thou?"

"Without guile and without offense, oh thou, Master-of-the-heart?"

"As thou sayest."

"Then the meaning discerned by thy pupil is this: Fame is to the truly wise what the perfume is to the Rose. An attribute to the giver of God and springing from the very nature of the Rose. Yet is not the consciousness of the sweetness there a part of the consciousness of the Rose?"

The Master smiled.

"Truly thy speech shows thee to be still my pupil, and at this mine aged heart must rejoice," he said gravely and courteously. "And, as thou sayest, a well earned fame is sweet to the human mind and, being well earned and justly due, may please the wise man well. But, think again, my pupil. Were it true fame and just due if the Master-of-the-heart were to play upon that heart, only in order that fame might accrue to himself?"

The pupil meditated but a moment ere he answered:

"Master, who art ever more my Master, tell me the true meaning and ending of that unfinished tale."

"Man, my pupil, is its meaning. Life, pupil of mine, were its ending, could life ever end. Perchance some one among the hearers of my unfinished story, which so many have finished for themselves, each reading himself into it and loving himself as he so read —perchance some one may at length discern that man himself is the tale and its meaning, a tale which is the object of all knowledge, the truth at the bottom of Life's well. Desiring that the memory of my tale should dwell with men until some among them, knowing its history, should discern the meaning, I gave it forth without an ending. For well I knew that that which is never reached, that which is unattainable, dwells longest in the changeful mind of man. Also that every man must, in his human nature, read himself into the tale of Life. And so, my pupil, thy Master hoped that were it but one reflective mind among the many minds, that one might glimpse the

meaning of my unfinished story. That meaning is: Man, know thyself."

The pupil touched his forehead with the hem of the teacher's robe.

"Truly thou art wise amongst the wisest;" he said.

"Not so, my pupil. For not one mind, not even thine, has understood my tale. This thou callest fame is to me the failure of my teaching. And, I am old, too old to teach again. I pass—I am myself an unfinished tale."

SLEEP.

" . . . A great portion of our lives passes in the unconsciousness of sleep, and perhaps no part is more usefully spent. It not only brings with it the restoration of our physical energies, but it also gives a true and healthy tone to our moral nature.

"Of all earthly things sleep does the most to place things in their true proportions, calming excited nerves and dispelling exaggerated cares. How many suicides have been averted, how many rash enterprises and decisions have been prevented, how many dangerous quarrels have been allayed, by the soothing influence of a few hours of steady sleep!

" . . . Its healing and restorative power is as much felt in the sickness of the mind as in those of the body, and, in spite of the authority of Solomon, it is probably a wise thing for men to take the full measure of it, which undoctored nature demands.

" . . . Some men have claimed for sleep even more than this. The night time of the body, an ancient writer has said, is the day time of the soul, and some who do not absolutely hold the old belief, that it is in the dreams of the night that the Divine Spirit most communicates with man, have, nevertheless, believed that the complete withdrawal of our minds from those worldly cares which haunt our waking hours and do so much to materialize and harden our natures is one of the first conditions of a higher life. In proportion, said Swedenborg, as the mind is capable of being withdrawn from things sensual and corporal, in the same proportion it is elevated into things celestial and spiritual.

"It has been noticed that often thoughts and judgments, scattered and entangled in our evening hours, seem sifted, clarified and arranged in sleep; that problems which seem hopelessly confused when we lay down are at once and easily solved when we awake, as though a reason more perfect than reason had been at work when we were in our beds.

"Something analogous to this, it has been contended, takes place in our moral natures. A process is going on in us during those hours, which is not, and can not be, brought so effectually, if at all, at any other time, and we are spiritually growing, developing, ripening more continually while thus shielded from the distracting in-

fluences of the phenomenal world than during the hours in which we are absorbed in them. . . .

"Is it not precisely the function of sleep to give us for a portion of every day in our lives a respite from worldly influences which, uninterrupted, would deprive us of the instruction, of the spiritual reinforcements, necessary to qualify us to turn our waking experiences of the world to the best account without being overcome by them.

"It is in these hours that the plans and ambitions of our external worldly life cease to interfere with or obstruct the flow of the Divine life into the will."

Lecky's *Map of Life.* Compare the above questions with the following passage of Charles Johnston's *Song of Life:*

" . . . Every day we wage our warfare with the world. Every night, when the throb of desire and the whirl of the senses grow still, we sink, as we call it, to sleep. We might more truly say we arise to our awakening. The shadows of our desires hover awhile around us, haunting us as we linger in the borderland of dreams. As our desires were, so are our dreams: things fair or hideous, grim or radiant with lovely light.

"But dreams soon fade and desires cease, and we enter into our rest. We pass from the world of the senses to the realm of immortal will. We enter in through the golden portal, far better than the fabled gates of ivory or horn, and for awhile we are immortal in power, immortal in peace. For without power there is no peace."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

Rudyard Kipling's success is chiefly due to two things: intensity and movement. If we think of his work as a whole, we pay immediate tribute to his intensity. We call up vivid spaces of gorgeous colour, full of rich tones and strong contrasts, and with a plentiful admixture of gilding, like a Byzantine mosaic. The broad and magnificent effect is gained by the accumulation of numberless small spaces of vivid colouring, all of the utmost definiteness, all highly burnished, and mingling in our imagination in rich, metallic luxuriance.

While we watch this highly tinted mosaic, with its broad gold spaces, figures begin to detach themselves from the general mass of colour; elephants, brown men, dogs, red-coats, horses, all running, furiously running. They are excited, and they carry us along with them, in their excitement. This is his power of movement. The two together are as stimulating and overpowering to the nerves as surf-bathing; and, in the dash of the spray and the swish of the water, no wonder if we forget that there are other things in the world besides surf; that there are shadowy forests, and mountains ribbed with snow.

It is only when we come to make an inventory of sense-impressions, that we realize how great is the difference in faculty between man and man; not so much between the less and the greatest, as among men admittedly of the first rank. Let me give an instance. Mark Twain will write a description of Spring which makes one's mouth water, so full is it of the luscious sense of young growth and budding freshness; yet from beginning to end he never uses the word green. He tells you, instead, that everything was so solemn, it seemed as though everybody you had loved were dead and gone, and you almost wished you were dead and gone too, and done with it all. He gains an intensely vivid effect, but it is altogether an effect of emotion, not of sensation. We feel what he is describing; we do not see it.

Again, Mark Twain will write of an evening when the moon was swelling up out of the ground, big and round and bright, behind a comb of trees, like a face looking through prison bars, and the black shadows began to creep around, and it was miserably quiet and still and night-breezy and grave-yardy and scary. And he will

probably complete the picture by saying that all the sounds were late sounds and solemn, and the air had a late feel, and a late smell too. Here you have a train of emotions, not sense-impressions at all.

Rudyard Kipling's vividness is the very opposite. It is wholly a matter of sensations, of sense-impressions, appealing equally to eye and ear and nose. There is no emotion or sentiment at all. The sense-impression is transferred to us complete, and then he leaves it to us to call up whatever emotion his picture produces. Mark Twain, on the other hand, transfers to us the emotions direct. Here is a moon scene to compare with the other. Rudyard Kipling is describing Delhi, on a hot and breathless night. He sees everything; the moonlight striping the mosque's high front of coloured enamel work in broad diagonal bands; each separate dreaming pigeon in the niches and corners of the masonry throwing a squat little shadow. If you gaze intently at the multitude, you can see that they are almost as uneasy as a day-light crowd; but the tumult is subdued. Everywhere in the strong light, you can watch the sleepers turning to and fro; shifting their beds and again re-settling them. In the pit-like courtyards of the houses there is the same movement. The pitiless moonlight shows it all. And the writer, with as little emotion as the moon, paints it all, in vivid impressions on our senses.

His ears are as alert as his eyes. They note how a drove of buffaloes lay their ponderous muzzles against the closed shutters of a grain-dealer's shop, and blow like grampuses. A stringed instrument is just, and only just, audible; high overhead, someone throws open a window, and the rattle of the wood-work echoes down the empty street; on one of the roofs, a hookah is in full blast, and the men are talking softly, as the pipe gutters. Every sound is delicately heard, and accurately rendered. The sense of smell is not forgotten: "from obscure gullies fetid breezes eddy that ought to poison a buffalo."

All this vivid detail is to gain the same effect which Mark Twain reached by saying that the sounds were late sounds; high up and solemn, and the smells were late smells, too. And against Mark Twain's mere white and black, Kipling has a whole range of moonlight colours, ebony, brown gray, ash colour, yellow, silver, and steel-white. When he paints the morning, Iris dips the woof: the witchery of the dawn turned the gray river-reaches to purple, gold,

and opal; it was as though the lumbering *dhoni* crept across the splendour of a new heaven.

Take another piece of vivid colouring, in a wholly different field; the description of Jan Chinn's tiger: "lazily as a gorged snake, he dragged himself out of the cave, and stood yawning and blinking at the entrance. The sunlight fell upon his flat right side, and Chinn wondered. Never had he seen a tiger marked after this fashion. Except for his head, which was staringly barred, he was dappled—not striped, but dappled like a child's rocking-horse, in richest shades of smoky black on red gold. That portion of his belly and throat which should have been white was orange, and his tail and paws were black."

We could almost draw a picture of the tiger, after reading this. Yet, oddly enough, the artist who illustrated the story, leaves out all these distinctive marks. Perhaps he had not the nerve to draw a tiger dappled like a rocking-horse, just as the artist of another picture leaves two ships half a mile apart, when Kipling tells us only fifty yards separated them. Again, why draw an American locomotive with a cow-catcher on the Ganges bridge? These are mistakes of a type which Kipling himself religiously or perhaps we should say, intuitively, avoids. It is noteworthy, on the other hand, that we take his tiger very quietly; it does not give us creeps and thrills and chills, as it would if Mark Twain were the showman. Kipling is all sensation, with hardly any emotion at all.

(To be Continued.)

THE ONE RELIGION.

III.

(Continued.)

On the other hand, the quest of one who seeks to discover a *Jnâni* from mere motives of curiosity will end in naught. A person may, it is said, be in daily association with one for years, even though knowing of the existence of such men and being desirous of meeting them, without suspecting his spiritual *status*. Several instances of this sort have been related to me, which happened to natives of the country; and it is well understood that *Jnânis* will not disclose themselves except to those who seek them for their spiritual guidance and are fitted to profit by it.

Such then are the men who are reputed in India to guard the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. Greater than all priests, above all formal religion, they furnish the goal, the incentive, but for which formal religion would cease to exist, or, as in many other parts of the world, would degenerate into mere empty ceremonial.

Filled with fervent love for that Supreme Lord whom they have actually known, with whom they are in constant fellowship, they have the gift of communicating that fire of love to others, or rather, perhaps, it flows *through* them from the Lord, "the Source of all Gifts," and this stream of Divine Grace, handed down from spiritual father to spiritual son, spreading abroad from one to another by virtue of simple association and contact, is that which makes of the religion of India a living, vital force, and which has preserved its vigor through the countless ages of its history.

That these men are channels for the direct manifestation of the power and wisdom of the Lord Himself is the common belief in India. It is also the belief of the Bahâis. Says Abbas Effendi:

"In this estate he becomes a center for receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. In this estate his spirit bears to the Holy Spirit the relation which before his body bore to his spirit. He becomes like a polished mirror. When he speaks, he gives forth the rays of the Sun of Reality. All the light which is reflected from this mirror is the light of the Holy Spirit." (Life and Teachings, p. 188).

And again:

"A stone reflects but slightly the rays of the sun; but if a mirror be held up, though it be small, the whole of the sun will be reflected in it, because the mirror is clear and bright. Just so is it with the minds of men and the Sun of Reality. The great Masters and Teachers so purified their minds by the love of God and of men that they became like polished mirrors, reflecting faithfully the Glory of God." (ib. p. 173).

Said Bahâ Ullah:

"O Son of Existence! Thy heart is My house; sanctify it, that I may come and dwell in it. Thy spirit is an aspect of My Essence; purify it for My Appearance." (ib. p. 247).

Being in union with the Lord, representing both God and man, the *Jnânis* of India are said to speak sometimes as one, sometimes as the other. Such also was the habit of Isaiah, Hosea, and other prophets of the Old Testament, and in the same way Bahâ Ullah frequently speaks as the Lord; and when on one occasion he had summoned two of his followers before him because of a quarrel between them which threatened to divide the church, one contending that Bahâ Ullah was God Himself, the other that he was but the reflection of God, he declared to them that both were right.

There are said to be notable differences between *Jnânis*. Thus some have far greater powers of exposition than others. This is a matter pertaining to the intellect, not the spirit, and depends upon inherited and acquired mental capacity. Again, some are said to be *Avatars*, or direct incarnations of the Deity. I need not, however, dwell on these differences, for they are not relevant to our present inquiry. All *Jnânis* are said to be alike in these respects—that they have had the same *spiritual* experience, have the *same knowledge* as to *spiritual things*, and are filled with like fervent love for the Lord.

It is said that it is impossible to hand down spiritual knowledge by means of books. It must be orally imparted; the sacred writings must be orally interpreted by a Teacher who knows from his own spiritual experience the true interpretation. If the chain of spiritual succession be broken, the oral tradition will be lost, and religion will

lapse from a spiritual interpretation of scripture to an interpretation based upon the letter. The intellect of men now asserts itself, and man-made dogmas are heaped one upon another until the plain and simple lessons of the religion in its purity are hidden by a maze of intellectual fabrications. The living spirit has fled, and but a shell, a corpse, is left.

Bahâism is no less insistent than Hinduism upon the necessity of a living Teacher who shall apply the spirit, without which religions are dead. This is the avowed purpose of the Bahâi Dispensation. Says Abbas Effendi:

"The spirit has passed away from the bodies of the old religions. All the teachings of the great Manifestations are sublime, their lives stand out as brilliant stars; but time changes all things, and while the form of their doctrines remains, the spirit has fled; but the same spirit is born in a new body that is the Body of the Law contained in the utterances of Bahâ Ullah. As the teachers of old, he came not to destroy, but to renew; and that which is true in all religions will stand, for truth cannot die. By the New Dispensation new spirit is infused into these teachings and they will be understood by men; and when they are understood there will no longer be room for contention." (Life and Teachings, p. 144).

"All things have qualities which are created with them—which are innate in them. The brilliance of the stars, the beauty of the trees, the brightness of the ocean, the fragrance of the flowers—all these qualities are innate in the objects to which they pertain. Man, also, has innate qualities; but there is in addition a perfection, not innate, which may be acquired by him. *Therefore man needs a Teacher;* for, in order that he may acquire this perfection, some one must aid him in bringing it forth. The gaining of Wisdom requires a Teacher." (Lib. p. 217).

"The Divine Messengers are like gardeners. They are sent that the trees of mankind may be trained and refreshed until they reach their perfect growth, and that when this is attained, they may bring forth their perfect fruit. If mankind come under the training of these real Teachers and be directed to true understanding and knowledge, all will be manifested and made known." (Lib. p. 223).

These quotations from Abbas Effendi are more explicit on the point than any texts I know of in the New Testament. We may notice, however, that Paul refers to the oral tradition in 2 Thess.

II, 15:—"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, *whether by word* or our epistle." And Peter has probably in view the danger of merely intellectual interpretation when he speaks of those who "wrest the scriptures to their own destruction." (2 Pet. iii, 16).

It is no doubt because of the necessity of genuine spiritual leadership in a living church that the institution of the priesthood arose. The priests of every religion are the nominal successors of those Illuminated men who were its founders and first spiritual leaders, and as such their function is to orally interpret the Holy Writ. So long as they themselves have the spiritual light, or seek instruction from those who possess it, they are real guides; but as soon as they lose touch with that living light, they become blind leaders of the blind.

If we accept these postulates and apply them to the history of Christianity, and compare the doctrines of the New Testament with those of the Sages of India, we are brought to the conclusion that the founders of Christianity, Jesus, John, Paul and probably Peter at least, were *Jnânis,* Christs, or Enlightened men; that as long as the spiritual succession was maintained, and the oral tradition which must always supplement the written scriptures was held intact, the doctrines of the faith were understood as they were taught; but that there came a time when, through lack of ripe material for attaining Christhood, the oral tradition was lost and the Western Christian Church fell into the state of division, uncertainty and empty formalism which largely prevail in it to-day. However, the present wide prevalence in this church, especially, I believe, in America, of genuine spiritual aspiration and broad-minded and charitable readiness to acknowledge and profit by light wherever it may be found, justifies the hope that this eclipse may not be permanent.

Applied to Bahâism, these postulates indicate that the presence of spiritual love and fervor which have characterized the life of the movement, the amazing spirit of courage and devotion which so many thousands of its Believers have displayed even to the death, the vital power which is causing such rapid expansion of the religion throughout the world, is all due to the spiritual influence, communicated to their followers and from one to another among them, of that group of *Jnânis* or Christs which have been its soul; three of whom, Abbas Effendi the third, have succeeded each other

in the leadership of the faith. Interpreted by these principles, it seems probable that when Bahâ Ullah fixed upon that one of his sons, Abbas Effendi, out of the number of sons he had, to succeed him and launch the religion, he did so because he knew that Abbas Effendi had attained, or would attain, the knowledge of God, and therefore would be competent to direct its course wisely; and it may now be expected that its purity and its vital force will continue so long as the material of its membership is sufficiently refined to maintain the spiritual succession.

The question naturally arises, Why has India rather than other lands been blessed through so many ages with the succession of saints which has guarded the purity and nourished the vigor of her religion? Natives of India believe that India was originally ordained to be the *Jnâna-Bhumi,* the land of spiritual knowledge, as long as the world should last, other lands being ordained to be *Bhoga-Bhumi,* lands of enjoyment.

However that may be, it is at once apparent that the climate of India is far more favorable to the contemplation, meditation and abstraction from worldly affairs, essential for emancipation, than most other countries.

We are indeed quite familiar with the recitals of the advantages of the temperate zones for the promotion of "civilization" and "progress;" and if real progress be towards the multiplication of wants and the invention of means to satisfy them, these advantages no doubt exist; while if progress be advancement towards the understanding of things of the spirit and of God, it is probable that the balance of advantages lies as much the other way.

The enormous population of India, the possession of these climatic advantages and perhaps others also which we are not in a position to understand, have favored the accumulation of an immense body of sacred writings, increased from age to age by the succession of Sages, known as *Jnâna-shastras* or guide books to spiritual living, which is an inexhaustible mine of wisdom as to spiritual things, giving to those who inherit its influence a natural bias towards spiritual rather than material living, and supplying a constant stimulus towards the maintainance of that uninterrupted series of Sages upon which the vitality and integrity of religion depends.

Such is the explanation which India gives us of the real origin and cause of those fluctuations of religious vitality and spiritual

power among the various people of the earth which are observed to occur in the course of history; and *per contra* of the persistence of those qualities which we observe in India herself. To me there is in this explanation great persuasive force, especially as I have myself met two men, Abbas Effendi and the Indian Sage to whom I have referred, whom I know to have the power of developing in others, by mere proximity and association, the fire of Divine love.

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